

REMARKS

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, reconsideration of the rejections contained in the Office Action of May 12, 2003 is respectfully requested.

In order to make necessary editorial corrections, the entire specification and abstract have been reviewed and revised. As the revisions are quite extensive, the amendments to the specification and abstract have been incorporated into the attached substitute specification and abstract. No new matter has been added by the revisions. Entry of the substitute specification is thus respectfully requested.

The drawings have now been amended so as to make minor formal corrections. In particular, Figure 1 has been modified in order to separately label each of the separate views shown in Figure 1. In this regard, the Examiner's attention is directed to the revised formal Figure 1 submitted herewith, which includes the changes discussed above. Since the changes in Figure 1 are directed only to matters of form, it is submitted that new formal Figure 1 does not include any new matter. Therefore, the Examiner is respectfully requested to enter new formal Figure 1.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-4 as being anticipated by Japanese reference 7-164728 (the JP '728 reference), and has withdrawn claims 5-7 as being directed to a non-elected invention. However, original claims 1-7 have now been cancelled and replaced with new claims 8-19, as indicated above. The set of new claims includes claims 8-10 and 15 which correspond to original elected claims 1-4, respectively, and all of the new claims read on the elected invention. For the reasons discussed below, it is respectfully submitted that new claims 8-19 are clearly patentable over the prior art of record.

New independent claim 8 is directed to a method of manufacturing a key top, including forming metalizing layer on a transfer substrate, and forming a first transparent printed layer in a pattern on the metalizing layer. The first transparent printed layer is resistant to etching, and the metalizing layer is etched so as to remove a portion of the metalizing layer not masked by the first transparent printed layer. Thus, a transfer layer, including the etched metalizing layer and the first transparent printed layer, is formed. *After the etching of the metalizing layer*, the transfer substrate is placed on a plastic key top body so as to transfer the transfer layer onto the key top body.

The method as recited in new independent claim 8 provides a reliable, quick, and efficient method of manufacturing a key top. In particular, as explained on page 4, paragraph 8, of the original specification, because the metalizing layer is etched *before* the transfer substrate is placed on the plastic key top body, and because the first transparent printed layer is resistant to etching, the first transparent printed layer acts as a masking layer during the etching of the metalizing layer. As a result, the metalizing layer can be accurately and quickly etched without the additional steps of forming and subsequently removing a separate masking layer on the metalizing layer. Consequently, the process of manufacturing the key top becomes extremely quick and more efficient.

The JP '728 reference is directed to method of manufacturing a plastic molding article including forming a concealment layer 2 on a base sheet 1, forming a layer 4 on the concealment layer 2, and then forming translucent coloring layers 31 and 32 on the layer 4. However, as explained in paragraphs 14 and 19 of the English translation, and illustrated in Figures 5 and 6 of the JP '728 reference, the etching of the concealment layer 2 (and, presumably, the layer 4) is performed *after* the transfer layer is placed on a plastic molding article 7. Therefore, the JP '728 reference does not disclose or suggest placing the transfer substrate on a plastic key top body *after the etching of the metalizing layer* as recited in claim 8. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the JP '728 reference does not disclose or suggest the invention recited in new independent claim 8, and it is submitted that independent claim 8 and the claims that depend therefrom are clearly patentable over the prior art of record.

The Examiner's attention is also directed to the subject matter recited in several of the depending claims, which further distinguishes the present invention from the prior art of record. In particular, new dependent claim 9 recites that a second transparent printed layer is formed on a surface of the transfer substrate, and that the metalizing layer is formed on a surface of the second transparent printed layer, while the first transparent printed layer is then formed in a pattern on the metalizing layer. In contrast, the JP '728 reference discloses that the layer 4, which may be a metal layer, is formed on the *concealment* layer 2. As explained in paragraph 19 of the JP '728 reference English translation, the concealment layer 2 comprises a material such as carbon black and, therefore, is *not* transparent and does not correspond to the second transparent printed layer. Thus, it is

submitted that the JP '728 reference does not disclose or suggest the formation of a first transparent printed layer, a metalizing layer, and a second transparent printed layer as recited in new dependent claim 9.

In addition, the JP '728 reference discloses laser-etching of the concealment layer, but does not disclose or suggest that the etching is performed using an etching solution as recited in new dependent claims 13 and 17.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance. However, if the Examiner should have any comments or suggestions to help speed the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is requested to contact the Applicant's undersigned representative.

Respectfully submitted,

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